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A Site Specific Advisory Board, Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act

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US Environmental
Protection Agency
Washington State
Dept of Ecology

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February 5, 2015

Stacy Charboneau, Manager

U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office

P.O. Box 550 (A7-75)

Richland, WA 99352

Kevin Smith, Manager

U. S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection

P.O. Box 450 (H6-60)

Richland, WA 99352

Re: Tank Farm Vapors

Dear Ms. Charboneau and Mr. Smith,

Background

The Hanford Advisory Board (Board) has always advocated for robust protections for worker health and safety at the Hanford Site. The tank vapor issue has been a problem for decades and subject to many studies and independent assessments. The Board is concerned about the consequences of worker exposures to chemical vapors in Hanford's tank farms.

Beginning in March 2014, numerous tank farm workers once again reported potential exposures to chemical vapors. The Hanford Site medical provider (HPMC Occupational Medical Services) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) - Office of River Protection gave presentations in May 2014 to the Board's Health, Safety and Environmental Protection Committee. The presentations identified actions to address the increase in reported exposures. In response to ongoing exposures, Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS), DOE's tank farm contractor, commissioned the Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) to determine the adequacy of the tank farm vapor protection program and provide recommendations. *The Hanford Tank Vapor Assessment Report*¹ was released in October 2014 and the Board was briefed on the results and WRPS' initial actions. However, the Board notes the disclaimer on the inside front cover of the SRNL Report. This disclaimer calls into question the reliability of the information.²

HAB Consensus Advice # 282

Subject: Tank Farm Vapors
Adopted: February 5, 2015

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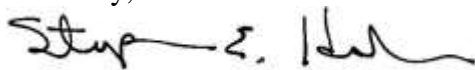
¹ *Hanford Tank Vapor Assessment Report*, SNRL-RP-2014-00791, Rev 0, October 30, 2014. http://srnl.doe.gov/documents/Hanford_TVAT_Report_2014-10-30-FINAL.pdf

The Board provides the following advice on worker health and safety issues related to chemical vapor exposures while WRPS develops its implementation plan regarding the SRNL recommendations.

Advice

- The Board advises DOE to ensure that proper effective personal protection equipment is made available to all tank farm workers in a timely fashion.
- The Board advises DOE to conduct a follow-up evaluation to identify any long-term health effects for employees who have reported an exposure to chemical vapors over the past 20 years. DOE should use this data as a basis for the need for an epidemiological study of long-term health effects from chemical vapor exposures of tank farm workers, as recommended by the SRNL Report.
- The Board supports accelerated implementation of technologies to detect, identify and control vapor emissions and exposures.
- The Board advises DOE to issue strong guidance to their third-party insurance administrator and the site medical provider to assure worker medical records document the initial acute symptoms. Thorough documentation is necessary to support compensation claims associated with chemical vapor exposure and ensure workers have timely access to appropriate specialists.
- The Board advises DOE to provide clear communication with workers and the public following vapor exposures.

Sincerely,



Steve Hudson, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

This advice represents Board consensus for this specific topic. It should not be taken out of context to extrapolate Board agreement on other subject matters.

cc: John Weisman, Secretary of Health, Washington State Department of Health
John Martell, Manager, Radioactive Air Emissions Section, Washington State Department of Health
Jeff Frey, Co-Deputy Designated Official, U.S. Department of Energy Richland Operations Office
Joni Grindstaff, Co-Deputy Designated Official, U.S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection

Dennis Faulk, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Jane Hedges, Washington State Department of Ecology
Elizabeth Schmitt, U.S. Department of Energy, Headquarters
The Oregon and Washington Delegations

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